

REMARKS

The present response is intended to be fully responsive to all points of objection and/or rejection raised by the Examiner and is believed to place the application in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application is respectfully requested.

Applicants assert that the present invention is new, non-obvious and useful. Prompt consideration and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Status of Claims

Claims 1 - 14 are pending in the application. The Examiner rejected claims 1, 2 and 9 - 11. The Examiner objected to claims 3 - 8 and 12 - 14. Claims 3, 4, 6, 7, 12 and 13 have been amended.

Claims 1, 2 and 9 - 11 have been canceled without prejudice. In making this cancellation without prejudice, Applicants reserve all rights in these claims to file divisional and/or continuation patent applications.

Applicants respectfully assert that the amendments to the claims and specification add no new matter.

Remarks to the Specification

The amendments to the specification are editorial in nature and do not introduce new matter.

The changes in paragraph [0003] and in paragraph [0024] were made in order to correct typographical errors identified by the Examiner.

Claim Objections

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 11 - 13 because of alleged informalities. Claims 3, 4, 6, 7, 12 and 13 have been amended, as suggested by the Examiner, in order to cure these informalities. In addition, in claims 3 and 12, Applicants have found further instances of the alleged informalities noted by the Examiner and have made the requested corrections.

Accordingly, Applicants request withdrawal of the objections.

Allowable Subject Matter

In the Office Action, the Examiner stated that claims 3 – 5 and 12 - 14 would be allowable if the Examiner's objection, discussed hereinabove, were overcome and if rewritten in independent form. The Examiner further stated that claims 6 – 8 would be allowable if the Examiner's objection, discussed hereinabove, were overcome.

Claims 3 and 12 have been rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of base claims 1 and 11.

Applicants respectfully assert that these amendments do not narrow the scope of claims 3 – 5, 6 – 8, and 12 – 14.

CLAIM REJECTIONS

35 U.S.C. § 102 Rejections

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2 and 9 - 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Kubon (5,682,030).

As claims 1, 2 and 9 - 11 have been cancelled without prejudice, these rejections are now moot.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the pending claims are deemed to be allowable. Their favorable reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner have any question or comment as to the form, content or entry of this Amendment, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number below. Similarly, if there are any further issues yet to be resolved to advance the prosecution of this application to issue, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned counsel.

Withdrawal of Assertion of Small Entity Status

Applicants' assertion of small entity status in this application is hereby withdrawn.

Petition For One-Month Extension Of Time Under 37 CFR 1.136(a)

The period for responding to the instant Office Action was set to expire on December 16, 2004. Applicant hereby requests that the period for responding to the instant Office Action be

extended by one (1) month, so as to expire on January 16, 2005. Accordingly, this response is being timely filed.

The fee for a Petition for a One-Month Extension of Time is One Hundred and Twenty Dollars (\$120.00) dollars for a large entity. No additional fees are believed due. The United States Patent and Trademark Office is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account 501380 in the amount of \$120.00 and any additional fee which is necessary in connection with the filing of this petition and response.

Favorable action on this amendment and petition is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



Daniel J. Swirsky
Attorney for Applicant(s)
Registration No. 45,148

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ALPHAPATENT ASSOCIATES LTD.
P.O.B. 2345
BEIT SHEMESH, ISRAEL 99544
TEL. (US) 516-620-4573
FAX. (US) 800-243-2384
dswirsky@alphapatent.com